

Network for the Studies of Cultural Distinction and Social Differentiation (SCUD)

Workshop 5 - Milton Keynes - April 13-14 2010

Cultural Capital: Limits and Prospects

Convenors: Tony Bennett and Elizabeth Silva

Paper Titles and Abstracts

Tony Bennett

Title: The role of aesthetics in the analytical architecture of "Distinction": A critique

Abstract

Most, if not all, of the empirical studies of the social distribution of tastes conducted in the wake of Distinction have concluded that the Kantian ethos of disinterestedness - an appreciation of aesthetic form for its own sake - is either nowhere to be found or spread very thinly even among the higher strata of professionals which supply its most ardent devotees. This is true not just of studies conducted outside France, but also of later studies in France. Does this mean that the stress Bourdieu placed on this was uniquely justified empirically in 1960s France? And that conditions have changed since both in France and elsewhere? Or might it suggest that the significance Bourdieu accorded this ethos within the analytical architecture of Distinction was misplaced? And that the same is true of subsequent attempts to see if it might be found elsewhere? I shall approach these questions via Jacques Rancière's accusation that Bourdieu so focuses on the opposition between the Kantian aesthetic and the working class culture of the necessary as to exclude any consideration of the other multiple games of distinction in which tastes are implicated. While arguing that this accusation fails to do justice to the fine grain of Bourdieu's analysis, I shall also suggest that it does help to foreground a number of problems arising from the misplaced theoretical prominence that Bourdieu gives to the Kantian aesthetic in his account of the class dynamics of taste. The consequences of this for approaches to the design of surveys of tastes will be discussed.

Predrag Cveticanin , Mihaela Popescu

The Art of Making Classes

Abstract

In Serbia, at the beginning of the 21st century social capital (understood in the Bourdieuan sense) represents an extremely valuable resource. As the consequence of the broken link between education and the job market, in Serbian society it still does not matter what you know, but mostly

whom you know. Therefore, in contrast to "Distinction" (1979/1984) where the entire analytical undertaking was accomplished by economic and cultural capital, in analyses of social space in Serbia, the concept of social capital and its operationalizations have an important analytical role to play. Differences, distinctions and groupings within social space in Serbia are also largely the result of symbolic struggles for the status of legitimate culture which have been waged in Serbian society between proponents of two types of cultural capital (global cultural capital and local cultural capital). The analysis of the role which these non-economic resources play in the constitution of social space in Serbia, and consequentially in shaping social classes and social groupings, which we label "resource groups", represents the core of our article.

The analyses presented in our paper are based on the results of a research which investigated cultural styles (2005) on a nationally proportional sample of 1364 respondents. In it we present the results of both approaches in the use of Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) as outlined in Lebart et al. (1984). First, using the "reciprocal approach" and based on data on respondents' cultural needs, cultural habits, tastes, cultural knowledge and cultural equipment, we constructed a field of cultural styles in Serbia. The analysis revealed that cultural styles in Serbia are structured along two important dimensions of which the poles are global and local cultural capital (on the first axis) and traditional culture and contemporary, popular culture (on the second axis). Then, based on indicators of economic, social and cultural capital, we constructed social space in Serbia and superimposed onto it (as passive variables) indicators of cultural and material consumption of its citizens. The results indicate that the determining forces in social space in Serbia (as in Bourdieu's analyses) are total volume of capital and composition of capital. However, our results differ from Bourdieu's in that capital composition is not realized as a different ratios of economic and cultural capital, but represents, instead, various combinations of resources which include the volume of economic capital, global cultural capital, local cultural capital, the social capital of solidarity and political social capital. Our analyses reveal that the complex interplay of these resources and strategies based on them, make up the basis on which four social classes, as well as a large number of resource groups which always display a particular asset as the dominant one, are founded in Serbia.

Jean-Pascal Daloz

Title: Reflections on the Usefulness and Limits of Bourdieu's Analytical Framework for the Comparative Study of Elite Distinction

Abstract

This presentation will begin with a brief summary of the central arguments developed in my latest book *The Sociology of Elite Distinction: From theoretical to comparative perspectives* (Palgrave, 2010). This book offers a systematic discussion of the theoretical frameworks dealing with symbolic manifestations of social superiority from a comparative standpoint. It aims to show that many classical approaches are stimulating and relevant in one way or the other to the analysis of the distinction of social elites. However, a serious problem arises from the fact that, more often than not, individual scholars or schools of thought have demonstrated overweening ambitions to build up

theories able to be systematically applied across cases. It is not a very difficult task for a comparativist to show the limits of many excessively generalising enterprises (including Bourdieu's) by providing significant counter-examples. This certainly does not call for the irrevocable rejection of these grand theories, nor to the construction of a new one. It rather calls for inductive work and for a thoughtful deployment of the relevant reading grids in relation to various contexts.

In this respect, drawing on some concrete illustrations from my book but mainly on some work in progress within the framework of a new volume in preparation, I would like to propose some reflections on a few selected themes such as: ostentation vs. understatement, or the complexity of dominant representations, and ask some questions such as: to what extent can we really speak of an "invention of taste" by elites in some societies at a certain historical stage?

Vincent Dubois

Title: Cultural Capital Theory vs Cultural Policy Beliefs: Pierre Bourdieu and French Cultural Policies

Abstract

Social inequalities towards culture were regarded in the 1960s in France both as a sociological problem and as a policy issue. Cultural capital theory has since then played a key role in the intellectual background of French cultural policies. Its first application to artistic questions dates back to *L'amour de l'art* (The love of art), published in 1966, which presented the results of a survey commissioned by the Commissariat général du plan (national planning agency) together with the recent ministry for Cultural affairs, in search for a scientific support to the making of a cultural democratisation policy. Despite important changes, the national statistical data on cultural activities ("pratiques culturelles des Français") published by the ministry for Culture remains inspired by cultural capital theory.

However, the actual orientations of French cultural democratisation policy have never really taken into account the lessons to be drawn from this sociology. For instance the traditional emphasis on a "supply policy" (to put it bluntly, asserting that the development of cultural proposals will lead to a larger and a more socially diversified audience) should be regarded as naïve in the scope of cultural capital theory (and was denounced as such by Bourdieu in the early 1960s).

I propose to go deeper into these issues, which could be a starting point to raise questions such as: the role of sociology in French cultural policy; how to analyse this policy from a Bourdieusian point of view; the place of cultural capital theory in current French cultural policy and sociology.

Elias le Grand

Title: Identity, Class and Place in a "Chav Town"

Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between identity, place and class in a marginalized area located in the outskirts of south London, which is derogatorily labelled a "chav town," predominantly working-class and white, has a large proportion of council house estates, and high rates of intergenerational unemployment and teenage pregnancy. Through ethnographic methods the paper explores residents' and particularly young people's identifications with the area. Contrary to recent arguments about the collapse of community in post-industrial, atomized localities and that solidarities have come to transcend locales, it shows that residents' social relations in and images of the area have *Gemeinschaft*-like features such as strong social ties, familiarity, interpersonal trust and sense of safety. But these accounts are far from rose-tinted as residents display exclusionary tendencies such as suspicion and hostility against outsiders. Moreover, accounts are ambiguous as notions of safety are negotiated against accounts of violence and muggings in the area and an awareness of its bad reputation. Symbolic boundaries are also constructed against other areas, e.g. Brixton, considered more dangerous. In conclusion, the paper makes a case for the role of face-to-face interaction in

constructing and sustaining notions of community.

Jostein Gripsrud, Jan Fredrik Hovden, (Hallvard Moe)

Title: Class, Education and Cultural Practices: A Changing Relationship

Abstract

In *Distinction* (1979) Bourdieu presented a strong case for the major importance of class socialization (via habitus) for the formation of cultural tastes and practices, and his findings have later been supported by a wealth of other studies. A research question which has been little explored, however, is the relative role of educational socialization in this matter, even if it traditionally has been seen as very important (as implied e.g. in the notion of *Bildung*). The understanding of this relationship, one may argue, becomes even more important as the proportion of the population with some form of higher education has risen sharply in most western societies.

In the last 10-20 years, these societies and their mediated public spheres have also been affected by other forms of rapid socio-cultural and technological change, including the introduction and proliferation of commercial broadcast channels and the swift adaption of interactive and mobile media. Taken together, such changes are of profound importance not only for our understanding of media audiences and the future functioning of the mediated public sphere, but also for the relationship between class and culture.

To explore these questions empirically, an extensive survey of the cultural tastes and practices of the students in all of the institutions of higher education in Bergen, Norway, which was first done in 1998 (N=1100) was repeated in 2008 (N=1200). Together, these two sets of data, each of which include also semi-structured interviews with about two dozen students, provide unique insight into the changes to and interrelations between cultural preferences, media use, social stratification and higher education. Through a series of multiple correspondence analyses, PCA and tabular analysis, the paper outlines the major changes in cultural tastes and practices and their relation to class and educational careers in this 10-year period. The use of new media, including changing audience/producer relations, is given particular attention.

Camilla Kennedy Harper

Title: The interaction between the Tate Gallery's presentation of artists and patterns of artistic preferences in their membership audience.

Abstract

The cultural imperialism of art museums and their role in the legitimizing of dominant culture was a key concern for Bourdieu in France. However empirical research on art museum audiences has tended to focus on the social structuring of participation rather than the influence of the institution on taste. Questions of a taste for art have tended to be treated separately in domestic or non institutional settings, and investigated in relation to the response of individuals to particular art works or genres. Therefore although art institutions are the site in which art is selected and made visible, the relationship between the art gallery and taste has tended to be separated in the process of research.

Using an analytical structure employed by Julia Noordegraaf in her study of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, I adopt Latour's concept of "script" as a way to understand the relationship between the Tate and the membership's taste for art. My analysis looks at museum presentation on two levels Firstly it focuses on the presentation of artists by the Tate throughout the gallery space and the implicit set of instructions and assumptions contained within the museum design that applies to the general visitor. Secondly, I consider the communicative devices used for members, the assumptions they make about the members and the behaviour these prescribe for the membership. I then look at the patterns of taste identified among Tate members, and how their artistic preference might reveal incorporation and resistance to the institutional script.

Olav Korsnes and Johannes Hjellbrekke

Title: Norwegian Patterns of Taste and Cultural Preferences

Abstract

This paper offers a preliminary analysis of the structures of taste and cultural preferences in Norway. The data originate from "The Culture and Media Survey 2004", distributed to a representative sample of Norwegians 18 yrs and older (N=1549). 53 questions on 7 different topics have been included in the analysis.

Troels Schultz Larsen

Title: Social heterogeneity among the residents of four dilapidated housing estates in Denmark: Outline of the social differentiation of dilapidated urban neighbourhoods as a springboard for a discussion of the social, political and symbolic function of the ghetto discourse in context of the Danish welfare state.

Abstract

Based on Bourdieus model of the principal principles of social differentiation in social space(volume of capital, combinations of capital and social trajectory) (Bourdieu 1984:126ff). This paper seeks to illustrate, how the residents of four Danish dilapidated neighbourhoods are socially differentiated by the same principles. The empirical material used is based on a questionnaire with 1017 respondents living in the four dilapidated neighbourhoods, collected in the winter of 2006/2007. Based on the findings of a multiple correspondence analysis of the material and a discussion of Wacquant's comparative analysis of the differences of the advanced marginalization in the American black ghettos and the former working-class districts in France urban periphery (Wacquant 2008a) it argued that there is no evidence to sustain the widespread tendency to describe

the dilapidated neighbourhoods in Denmark, as ghettos and parallel societies. Rather it is argued that an analysis of the problems of dilapidated neighbourhoods should takes into account the present social fragmentation of the dilapidated neighbourhoods which in turn it is argued can be described as the product of the historical development of a dual housing market understood as the product over time of social struggles (mainly in the field of power, the political field and the bureaucratic field) between different groups and interest in social space.

Bruno Jose Monterio

Title: The birth of Purgatory. Institutional conscription spaces, unemployment "rehabilitation" policies and the lived experience of class.

Abstract

The restructuring of the local social space, accentuated in the working class positioning by an economic conjuncture (rise of unemployment, chronic indebtedness and growing casualization in the labour market) that has socially differentiated repercussions, is connected with the weakening of the social and cultural autochtony that traditionally ensured differing mechanisms for the "crisis". Multiplying the situations for collective and personal experiences of negation, and contracting the

space of opportunities and horizon of expectations for a whole social group it generalizes an existential anxiety among industrial workers.

The institutional treatment of "unemployment", along with a tutorial orientation towards the creation of "employability" among unemployed workers, made the "waiting rooms" fundamental (de)socialization places for the structuring of the working class life-world. In there, the "rehabilitation" policies are actualised as systematic operations of symbolic alchemy, institutionally situated, aimed to the de/re-conversion of industrial workers. The categories of classification enmeshed in the "bureaucratic" practical sense individualise and psychologise ("employability", "inadaptation", "motivation", etc.) the genesis and prorogation of (un)employment. Thus, in spite of political professed intentions, these institutional principles of vision tend to perceive and label these unemployed workers as apparently incompetent ("indifferent", "lack of initiative", "absence of will", "oldfashioned", "disinterested", "demoralized"). The mere enactment of these procedures, implicitly assuming the economic subalternity and cultural inferiority of these workers, acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy that discloses the unemployed workers, at their own eyes, as disgraceful and disgraceful.

As it selectively emphasizes "forma" credentials and schemes (educational certificates, "curriculum", "active job search", "employment"), it ignores and denegates that the personal labour history of these workers is essentially sustained in practical competences - tacit schemata of action and thought reiteratively embodied along a labour trajectory (akin a somatic culture) - and forms of sociability that are active and valued only in socially and physically circumscribed places.

The institutional "internment" creates a moratoria period for these workers, enacts a suspension of their dispositions and aptitudes that renders the "rehabilitation" policies and the "treatment" organizations for the unemployed spaces of des-socialization and contra-conversion.

Annick Prieur

Title: New forms of cultural capital?

Abstract

When scholars use the term cultural capital today, they tend to mean (or intend to mean) the same as Bourdieu meant when he coined the concept. But can cultural capital be the same in Denmark as in France? And is cultural capital today the same as it was when *Distinction* was written? Does it have the same characteristics - or may be rather the same function? The paper seeks to sum upon the usage of the concept in current studies in order to see whether researchers attribute the same or different meanings to the concept. Further, some findings from the COMPAS-project in Aalborg as

well as from other recent European studies will be presented for a discussion of which content we ought to give to the concept today.

Semi Purhonen, Jukka Gronow, Keijo Rahkonen

Title: "Highbrow culture" in Finland: Knowledge, taste and participation.

#### Abstract

This paper explores the social distribution of involvement in highbrow culture in the light of three interrelated debates in cultural sociology. First, highbrow cultural orientation is seen as an indicator of cultural capital or, more generally, of social status, and thus contributing to the symbolic side of social exclusion and cultural inequality. According to this "cultural capital scheme", most famously formulated by Pierre Bourdieu [1], highbrow culture is strongly interrelated with different indicators of high social position. Second, it has been claimed that highbrow cultural orientation has lost its special role in the cultural hierarchy due to the more general cultural shift in the last decades. This "meltdown scenario" [2] suggests that not only the popularity of highbrow activities but also their distinctiveness (i.e. as a marker of high social status) have decreased among younger cohorts, especially among the highly educated parts of them, in comparison to the highly educated among the older cohorts [3]. The third debate deals with the "eminization" of highbrow culture. Many studies have shown that women tend to be more involved than men in highbrow cultural activities [4]. However, there has not been consensus about how to interpret this "puzzle of women's highbrow cultural participation" [5].

In the paper, these issues are empirically addressed in the case of contemporary Finland. Drawing on a nationally representative survey data (N=1,388), collected by Statistics Finland in 2007-08 [6], the purpose of the paper is to examine highbrow culture by measuring it in all three dimensions of cultural practices: knowledge, taste and participation, covering three different cultural fields: music, literature and the visual arts. For instance, the field of music is dealt with a series of questions on the likes/dislikes of different musical genres, knowledge of certain cultural products (musical pieces) and participation in events (concert attendance). We construct measures to knowledge of, liking for and participation in highbrow culture in each cultural field. All the measures of highbrow culture are then analysed, by means of logistic regression, according to socio-demographic variables: gender, age, education, occupational class, personal income and residential area.

This paper adds to the debate by exploring highbrow culture in three cultural fields (music, literature and the visual arts) at the same time, which enables us to compare the results between the fields [7]. In addition, we also measure involvement in highbrow culture by three different ways (through knowledge, taste and participation), which enables us to compare the results between these dimensions of cultural practices [8]. Previous studies have mostly been restricted to one cultural field and/or to one dimension of cultural practices. It is essential, however, to Bourdieu's argument about the transferability of the habitus to different cultural domains - by which the systematicity and



unity of cultural practices is produced - that we identify homologies between cultural hierarchies, as well as between knowledge, tastes and participation in various cultural fields. (\*475 words)

Lennart Rosenlund

Title: Social and spatial structures in an urban environment

Abstract

This contribution is founded on findings from a thorough, empirical study of a specific urban community that has undergone a profound and rapid process of social change, Stavanger, the oil capital of Norway. It begins with reflections on how to construct a social structure that synchronically and diachronically is able to catch the most potent mechanisms of social division and of relations of domination in contemporary society. Pierre Bourdieu's conception of "the space of social positions" is then introduced as a useful device for such a venture. This conception postulate that processes of social differentiation should be conceived as multidimensional phenomena and that the distribution of economic and cultural capital are pivotal for their understanding. In doing so a recent survey of lifestyles among the citizens is exploited.

It then proceeds by examining a version of Bourdieu's second space construct that of the "space of lifestyles". This is a representation of divisions and contradiction within a universe of finely differentiated set of beliefs, practices, symbols and strategies, both conscious and unconscious, all products of differentiated habituses. What emerges are relations of homology; the universe of basic conditions of existence (the space of social positions) and the universe of beliefs, practices and symbols (the space of lifestyles) are governed by the very same principles of differentiation: volume and compositions of capital. Finally, within the infinite space of lifestyles it is possible to establish a particular symbolic space consisting of imageries of the various residential areas, which is structured by the same set of principles (volum and composition of capital). The inhabitants have "practical knowledge" about their community that has been developed being a citizen of it. They "know" where they would fit in and where they don't. They tend to favour areas where their own sorts (social positions and lifestyle configurations) are prevalent and they tend to reject those where they are few and where they would have been excluded.

This is the main part of the intervention. The analysis is based on data on living condition in the urban area of Stavanger produced by the municipality. The city has been divided into 68 homogenized zones with approximately equal number of inhabitants in each. The database contains vital statistics of each of these zones. The analysis has been undertaken with GDA (APC and cluster analysis) and the presentation of the results is aided by the help of maps and photographs. The results indicate that social agents in dominant positions in the space tend to favour "high status", high price areas, those in dominated positions favours dominated areas (bad reputation, bad infrastructure etc.). Groups whose capital accounts are dominated by cultural capital, favours areas that are being gentrified, or have potentials of being so, while those whose capital assets are dominated by economic capital prefer the suburban areas in the periphery of the city. Seen in this way the spatial organization of the community is not only a physical reflection of the major forces of social differentiation, but it becomes a force of its own in the reproduction of relations of domination and inequality.

José Virgílio

Title: Sociological remarks and ethnographic notes on the experience of unemployment in an industrial region in North-West Portugal

Abstract

In the frame of Bourdieu's work on the embodied experience of time and space (from his early work about Algeria to his late work about the consequences of neoliberal political agendas in 1990's France), the present paper tries to identify, drawing on sociological data and ethnographic work developed during the last two decades, the main practical and symbolical properties of the transformations in economic activity in an industrialized region of North-West Portugal. Experienced as «crisis», these transformations are red in different ways by the social agents that are involved in their (re)production. Contrary to a simple view of the problems here in question (recurrent in Portuguese public opinion), unemployment, as the main effect of crisis, is a complex phenomenon. Sociologically speaking, unemployment in this region has a social configuration organized in four main «structural domains», that makes it vary according (i) to the social (production of the) class of the agents, according (ii) to the relation these agents (re)produce with the economic field (structured, for more than one century, in textile industry), according (iii) to the social capital these agents mobilize(d) and (iv) in function of the way future is socially produced by them. Given this configuration and the way it is affected by the recent consequences of the relations between State-led economic policies and the economic field in the region, the paper identifies three relevant social types of unemployment ('massive', 'strategic' and 'very prolonged but state supported') and produces an ethnographic analysis on the effects of crisis in their structuration.